

from the flesh of the nameless, unnumbered multitudes of men condemned by life throughout its course to misery. It has its roots where death and defeat have been. It has its roots in all bruised and maimed and frustrate flesh, in all flesh that might have borne a god and that perished barren. It has its root in every being who has been without sun, in every being who has suffered cold and hunger and disease, and pierces down and touches every voiceless woe, every defeat that man has ever known. And out of that sea of mutilated flesh it rises like low, trembling speech, halting and inarticulate and broken. It has no high, compelling accent, no eloquence. And yet, it has but to lift its poor and quavering tones, and the splendour of the world is blotted out, and the great, glowing firmament is made a sorrowful gray, and, in a single instant, we have knowledge of the stern and holy truth, know the terrible floor on which we tread, know what man has ever suffered, and what our own existences can only prove to be.

Mr. Rosenfeld's first book of essays at once establishes him as one of the few writers on music able really to illuminate their subject.

DANIEL GREGORY MASON.

### A HUMAN DOCUMENT.

ETHNOLOGY has a curiously dual aspect. It can treat its subject-matter with all the objectivity of a natural science. Cultural traits may be noted much as a zoologist records the fauna of a given region, and their distribution may be traced over the whole of the earth. Indeed, some writers have carried objective methods to the extent of calculating mathematically how probable it is for certain features to appear together. Yet interesting and important as such studies undoubtedly are, they fail to convey a just picture of that intangible something represented by each culture as a whole. For here, as in psychology, the whole is more than merely a collection of so many independent atoms. To catch the elusive essence that distinguishes one culture from another is a task generically different from that of reporting and classifying cultural phenomena. It makes demands upon a distinctively æsthetic factor of our make-up, the capacity for sympathetically entering into a set of concrete experiences and of transmitting to a wider circle the impressions received. That is difficult enough when the experience relates to our own culture: it becomes a well-nigh impossible ideal when the culture to be portrayed is not only different but vastly remote from ours, separated by barriers of tradition and of speech as well.

No wonder that attempts in this direction generally remain half-hearted beginnings or outright failures and that even those most keenly sensible of the need for such work have contented themselves with pious wishes for its execution. Many have been deterred by the fear of colouring the picture with Caucasian rather than with primitive folk-thoughts. On the other hand, an unqualifiedly genuine native view seems beyond reach, for the material provided in folk-tales, valuable as it is, affords only incidental glimpses of the aboriginal attitude.

Under these conditions a recent publication by Dr. Paul Radin<sup>1</sup> must be hailed as a veritable godsend. Working among the Winnebago Indians of Wisconsin and Nebraska, this investigator prevailed upon a middle-aged informant, who is designated by the letters "S.B.", to jot down his reminiscences in the syllabary now current among his people. This autobiography was then translated with the aid of a competent interpreter and is presented to the public with ample editorial annotations. The result is a human document of extraordinary value alike for the ethnologist, the psychologist, and the lay reader.

Though there are several strange intrusions of Caucasian civilization into the life of the modern Winnebago, the old spirit has in many ways remained strangely intact. Superficial association with whites could not crush S.B.'s fidelity to the ancient code. We find him,

for instance, coolly aiding in the murder of a man from a hostile tribe in order to reap military renown in the approved traditional fashion. Altogether the absorbing passion for social distinction that animates primitive man to a degree rarely realized by the outsider is strikingly revealed by this autobiography.

It is, however, S.B.'s religious experiences that are the pivotal point of the whole narrative. To appreciate them at their real significance one must first take into account the schism that has divided Winnebago society during the last decades. According to the ancient usage men were obliged to seek visions from the spirits and to participate in the current rituals. The acme of native ceremonialism was represented by the Medicine Dance, into which novices were initiated through a symbolical killing and resuscitation. But in quite recent times the ascendancy of the time-honoured doctrines was challenged by a new cult whose votaries had imbibed some of the ethical and religious conceptions of Christianity and in a remarkable way compounded them with the older point of view. The outer symbol of their faith was the ritualistic eating of buttons of the peyote cactus, which produces remarkable hallucinatory and emotional effects.

It is indeed fascinating to read how S. B., who had vainly sought visions in the old-fashioned way, is converted by the strange experiences induced by the mysterious peyote. Through this change the reminiscences are transmuted into the confessions of a regenerated sinner. The narrator is giving "testimony": he constantly exaggerates his earlier wickedness as a natural man in order to shed all the more lustre upon his character in the re-born state. This must caution us against accepting his account as a photographic self-portrayal. But of course no one is interested in the extent of S. B.'s early philanderings and debauches, nor does anyone care how long he may remain true to the ways of respectability. The rationalizations by which he unconsciously falsifies his career are themselves of the utmost value, as evidence of the psychology of religious conversion. His autobiography might well have been largely quoted from in James's "Varieties of Religious Experience."

In the interest of ethnology and of the general public too, it is to be hoped that the example set by Dr. Radin will be widely emulated by his colleagues and that before it is too late there may be gathered some dozens of such sketches revealing the true inwardness of native cultures.

ROBERT H. LOWIE.

### A REVIEWER'S NOTE-BOOK.

It is quite astonishing still to find young and intelligent persons who can not forgive Ezra Pound for living in England and sticking out his tongue at his native land. It seems to me that if American literature is ever to be really roused it will be largely through the Instigations (to use the apt title of Mr. Pound's new book, published by Boni and Liveright) of a band of impenitent gadflies who have nothing to lose and who have got their country into the sort of perspective that comes best from living outside of it. Do you remember in Ibsen's letters how he describes the sensations with which he sailed up the fjord after a ten years' absence from home?—"A feeling of weight settled down on my breast, a feeling of actual physical oppression. And this feeling lasted all the time I was at home; I was not myself under the gaze of all those cold, uncomprehending Norwegian eyes at the windows and in the streets." That abyss of the exile between Ibsen and his countrymen was indispensable to the growth of a vision that revolutionized in time the whole spiritual life of Norway. I am not suggesting that Ezra Pound is another Ibsen, or that one can not maintain this abyss of exile without crossing the ocean. What I mean is that Ezra Pound has very much at heart the civilization of these United States. And I am sure he has done more for the new literature in this country than many of those who claim a proprietary right over it.

<sup>1</sup>"The Autobiography of a Winnebago Indian." Paul Radin. University of California Press: Berkeley, Cal.